

95 LDS Theses

Please go to mormonreformation.blogspot.com for links to primary sources for each claim.

The Book of Mormon

- 1 The primary translation method occurred by Joseph Smith putting his face in a hat and reading a rock known as a seer stone. Despite this, the Church frequently misrepresents the method Joseph used to translate.
- 2 There is no archaeological evidence of the Book of Mormon, a fact that seriously undermines its authenticity claims.
- 3 The Book of Mormon is filled with anachronisms that also damage credibility as a Divine record.
- 4 DNA evidence shows that Native Americans do not come from Middle Eastern heritage. Recently, the Church changed its claim that “the Lamanites are the principal ancestors of the American Indians” to the Lamanites “are among the ancestors of the American Indians”.
- 5 Many Book of Mormon names and places are strikingly similar to local name and places that Joseph Smith would have been familiar with. Such a resemblance is too close to be a coincidence.
- 6 The Book of Mormon teaches a Trinitarian view of the Godhead. Joseph Smith’s early theology also held this view.
- 7 Rather than translating with Divine help, evidence supports that Joseph Smith plagiarized a significant portion of the Book of Mormon from the Bible, Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews and other books contemporary to Joseph’s time.
- 8 For a book Joseph Smith claimed to be “the most correct of any book on earth,” it is suspicious that the text has undergone nearly 4,000 changes. Most of the changes, apologists argue, are small grammatical or punctuation fixes. However, there have been significant doctrinal revisions as well.
- 9 The Book of Mormon includes Biblical passages that were later changed in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. These Book of Mormon verses should match the inspired JST version instead of the KJV version that Joseph later revised.
- 10 The story of Laban in First Nephi illustrates that God’s command must invariably be followed, even if it means committing murder. This is a dangerous message that inspires religious extremism.
- 11 The Book of Mormon quotes Bible verses written after 600 B.C. In other words, these passages didn’t yet exist when Lehi left Jerusalem.

The Book of Abraham and Other Translation Issues

- 12 Despite Joseph’s claim that this record was written by Abraham “by his own hand upon papyrus”, scholars have found the original papyrus Joseph translated and have dated it in first century AD, nearly 2,000 years after Abraham could have written it.
- 13 Egyptologists have found the source material for the Book of Abraham to be nothing more than a common funerary text. Joseph was completely wrong in his translation.
- 14 The Church has denied that Joseph made Abraham-ic claims about the papyrus, but still insists that “a testimony of the truthfulness of the book of Abraham is not found in an analysis of physical evidence nor historical background, but in prayerful consideration of its content and power.”
- 15 Joseph was fooled into thinking the Kinderhook plates were ancient records and even attempted to translate them. This demonstrates that he had no real gifts of translation or Divine revelation.
- 16 Joseph Smith showed his ineptitude for translation when he declared a Greek Psalter to be Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Polygamy and Polyandry

- 17 Joseph Smith illegally married at least 33 women, some of whom were as young as 14 years old. Some of Joseph’s marriages were secured by promising salvation or threatening damnation.
- 18 Joseph Smith married at least 11 women who were already married to other men. This practice is known as polyandry, for which no reference can be found on the Church’s web site. In some cases, Joseph married the wives of men whom he had sent away on missions. Brigham Young also married other men’s wives.
- 19 It is known that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy, but it is also true that Joseph was accused of sexual impropriety multiple times in several states before the practice of polygamy was revealed and commanded.
- 20 Joseph Smith and a young woman named Fanny Alger engaged in what Oliver Cowdery called “a dirty, nasty, filthy affair”. Even if Joseph married Fanny as is claimed, he would have had no civil or spiritual authority to do so.

- 21** Leaders of the Church, starting with Joseph Smith, systematically lied about practicing polygamy. Even recent leaders have been deceptive about when and why polygamy was practiced.
- 22** Joseph Smith routinely lied to his wife Emma about his extra-monogamous activities, often making her feel alone, abused and foolish. Why would God reveal a commandment to His prophet that would require such deception?
- 23** In 1886, John Taylor received a revelation regarding the practice of plural marriage. In the revelation, the Lord told Taylor “I have not revoked this law, nor will I, for it is everlasting.” Four years later, Wilford Woodruff contradicted Taylor’s revelation by issuing the 1890 Manifesto.
- 24** The Church historically lied and presently still lies in telling the membership and outside media that polygamy ended in 1890. In actuality, Church-sanctioned and performed plural marriages continued until 1904 and beyond.
- 25** Jacob 2:24 reads, “Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.” D&C 132:38-39 reads, “David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon ... and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me. David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me.” This is one example of many scriptural inconsistencies in LDS canon.
- 26** The Church allowed an adulterer, Richard Lyman, to serve as an apostle for 18 years before excommunicating him. Although it appears that fellow members of the quorum did not know about Lyman’s adultery, these “prophets, seers, and revelators” should have had the spirit of discernment to know of Lyman’s unworthiness.
- 27** Doctrine & Covenants 121:36 teaches that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven”, and can be “handled only upon the principles of righteousness.” Given this fact, ordinances performed unrighteously (such as those by Apostle Lyman for 18 years) should not be acceptable in the eyes of God or the Church. However, such ordinances are rarely, if ever, re-performed.

The Establishment of the Church

- 28** In defiance of God’s command to not join any churches, Joseph Smith joined the Methodist Church.
- 29** Joseph Smith told multiple different versions of the events surrounding the First Vision. He waffled on key details including when it happened and what he saw.
- 30** The First Vision was not taught in church until 22 years after it happened. Why would such a miraculous event not be shared at the outset?

- 31** Between the time of the First Vision and the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith was convicted of fraud for taking clients’ money under false claims that he could detect the whereabouts of hidden treasure.
- 32** Joseph Smith initially claimed that the angel who visited him was Nephi. This confusion calls into question the veracity of an actual angelic visit.
- 33** Given its dimensions and weight, the Gold Plates would have been quite difficult to transport. So the story of Joseph escaping from attackers while carrying the plates is far-fetched.
- 34** The Church uses the testimony of the Three and Eight Witnesses to support the authenticity of the Gold Plates. But there are significant problems with these testimonies, primarily that the witnesses claimed to see the plates only with “spiritual eyes”.
- 35** Brigham Young claimed that there was a cave located at the Hill Cumorah containing “wagon loads” of ancient records “piled up in the corners and along the walls”. No such cave has ever been found.
- 36** Although the Priesthood is now taught to have been restored in 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery made no such claim until at least 1834. Why did it take five years for Joseph to tell members of the Church about the Priesthood?
- 37** The name of the restored Church was changed several times in the first few years after it was established. Why would a prophet receiving revelation have to revise the proper name of God’s Church so many times?

The Word of Wisdom

- 38** Joseph Smith smoked tobacco and drank tea, coffee, and alcohol long after he revealed the Word of Wisdom. In fact, Joseph Smith at one time had a bar in his house and also drank wine at Carthage shortly before he died.
- 39** Although it is argued that the Word of Wisdom was initially a suggestion and not a commandment, Joseph Smith taught “that no official member in this Church is worthy to hold an office” if he neglects to obey the Word of Wisdom. By his own teaching, Joseph was not worthy to hold his calling of prophet.
- 40** Joseph Smith and other early leaders taught that because animals had spirits, they should only be eaten in times of “dire necessity”. Not only does the Church ignore this aspect of the Word of Wisdom, it also acts in direct defiance and hypocrisy by owning and operating the largest cattle ranch in the United States.
- 41** Brigham Young owned a distillery in Utah and sold whiskey to saints for Pioneer Day celebrations.

- 42** The official change of the Word of Wisdom from principle to requirement came with no claim of Divine instruction. On the contrary, the shift seems to have taken place for political reasons surrounding Prohibition and desire for mainstream Christian acceptance.

The Temple

- 43** Members are taught to believe that Joseph Smith received the endowment through revelation. However, much of the temple ceremony was copied directly from Masonry.
- 44** The Church requires an oath of commitment from temple participants before the participant knows to what he or she is committing.
- 45** Until 1990, the temple ceremony contained violent penalties requiring members to make symbolic gestures of slitting their own throats and bowels. Recent Church leaders have been dishonest about these penalties.
- 46** The removal of these penalties, among other changes, came not by revelation but as a result of a 1988 survey that found that many members were uncomfortable with the endowment.
- 47** As disturbing as the temple penalties are, the fact that the ceremony changed is also troublesome because Joseph Smith taught that “ordinances instituted in the heavens are not to be altered or changed.”
- 48** Leaders of the Church have allowed baptisms for dead Holocaust victims, despite promising not to do so.

The Death of Joseph Smith and Succession Crisis

- 49** The Church portrays Joseph Smith as a martyr jailed and killed for being a “lover of the cause of Christ”. He was actually killed for destroying private property, trying to marry other men’s wives, sharing Masonic secrets, anointing himself King of the world, and other reasons.
- 50** Church leaders teach that Joseph Smith destroyed the Nauvoo Expositor because it told anti-Mormon lies. In actuality, the newspaper truthfully exposed the Prophets extra-monogamous relationships, among other clandestine behaviors.
- 51** Joseph Smith claimed that he was going to Carthage “like lamb to the slaughter”. What the Church doesn’t teach is that Joseph had a gun in jail and shot and killed two of his attackers.
- 52** Joseph Smith set apart his son, Joseph III, to succeed him as prophet. Brigham Young admitted this, but ultimately refused to cede his own leadership to Joseph III.

Failed Prophecies, False Doctrine, and Modern Revelation

- 53** Joseph Smith taught that the moon was inhabited, and that its inhabitants were 6 feet tall and dressed like Quakers. Brigham Young also taught that the moon is inhabited, as well as the sun.
- 54** Through revelation, Joseph Smith assembled an army of saints to walk to Missouri to redeem Zion. Known as Zion’s camp, this march resulted in the death of 14 men and did not accomplish what it set out to do. However, the church still teaches that this chapter of church history was actually a test for future leaders and ultimately a success.
- 55** After Joseph Smith’s prophecy to sell the copyright to the Book of Mormon failed, he explained it away by saying that some prophecies come from the devil.
- 56** Joseph Smith made a number of other prophecies that never came to pass. Apologists use manipulative tactics to justify Joseph’s failures.
- 57** Brigham Young taught that Adam is our father and God, a teaching that later prophets have admitted as not true. More broadly, apostles have told us that the Lord permits false doctrine to be taught within the church.
- 58** Wilford Woodruff pronounced “the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of this Church to lead you astray.” Unfortunately, this promise has been proven to be untrue.
- 59** Members of the Church are taught that prophets talk to God and speak for God. But some modern-day prophets admitted that they had never seen, heard, or received revelations from God.
- 60** The Quorum of the Twelve and members of the First Presidency are sustained as “prophets, seers, and revelators”. Regardless, they haven’t prophesied, seen, or revealed much of anything over the last 100 years.

Revising and Suppressing History

- 61** The Church has changed the dates of events in the D&C in order to make Joseph’s conflicting claims appear more plausible.
- 62** In the 1980’s Church leaders bought forged documents that they believed to be authentic, with the intention of suppressing them. Not only does this event discredit the notion that the Brethren have the spirit of discernment, it also shows the extent to which the Church will try to hide information that disproves the Church’s exclusive Truth claims.

- 63** The “Teachings of Brigham Young” manual dishonestly implies that Brigham was a monogamist by listing only two non-concurrent wives. Church editors have also changed all of Brigham’s mentions of “wives” to “wife”.
- 64** For years, Church leaders have told the untrue story that Thomas B. Marsh left the church over “milk strippings”. In truth, Marsh left in large part because he didn’t agree with the violent practices of the Danites.
- 65** Brigham Young said “I have never preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call scripture.” Despite this prophetic utterance, later church leaders have dismissed as non-scriptural the Journal of Discourses, from which this quote and many other of Brigham’s teachings come.
- 66** Boyd K. Packer and other church leaders have openly advocated obscuring and editing history by teaching us that “some things that are true are not very useful.”
- 67** The Church stifles honest scholarship of Mormonism, going as far as excommunicating people who find and publish history that contradicts the Church’s narrative.

Other Dishonest Practices

- 68** The Church reports inflated and inaccurate membership numbers.
- 69** The 12th article of Faith states that “we believe in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” One way in which the Church ignores its own counsel is by baptizing illegal immigrants, and even giving them leadership callings.
- 70** The Church has knowingly allowed and at times encouraged unethical missionary recruiting practices including baseball baptisms in the U.K. and soccer baptisms in Latin America.
- 71** Leaders moved forward with plans to build a nine-story addition to the Missionary Training Center, despite having promised that no MTC building would ever exceed four stories. (The Church eventually backed off of their plans due to negative press).
- 72** Church leaders teach members to bear testimony in order to obtain one. This is a manipulative practice that leads to confirmation bias.
- 73** When asked whether Mormons believe that God was once a man, Gordon B. Hinckley dishonestly said “I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it.”

Violent History

- 74** Brigham Young and other Church leaders taught that some sins were so serious that they were beyond the reach of Christ’s atonement. These sins, Young taught, could only be atoned for by literally spilling the blood of the sinner upon the earth.
- 75** In the past, the Church tried to deny Young’s violent teaching. Now, most leaders admit that it was taught but denounce it as a false doctrine.
- 76** The Church has never truthfully admitted to, or apologized for, its involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a tragedy in which 120 emigrants were brutally slaughtered by Mormons at the command of Church leadership.
- 77** Brigham Young wrote a letter to Bishop Warren Snow of Manti, approving of violent actions taken by Snow. The Bishop had castrated a young man who was courting a woman Snow wanted to take as his own plural wife.

Treatment of Blacks, Women, and Homosexuals

- 78** Even though Joseph Smith ordained a black man to the priesthood, the Church institutionally denied individuals of African descent full blessings of membership for over 100 years.
- 79** For many years, leaders of the Church taught that dark skin is a curse that is caused by inferiority and sub-par valiance in the pre-existence. Some leaders have even suggested that dark skinned “members of the Church are changing to whiteness and delightsomeness.”
- 80** Despite overwhelming evidence of racism in the early modern Church, leaders continue to claim that the reason for the priesthood ban is unknown. As such, the Church has never admitted error or apologized for excluding blacks from the priesthood.
- 81** For many years, Church leaders taught that African Americans could only enter the Celestial Kingdom as servants.
- 82** Unbeknownst to most members of the Church, early Latter-day Saint women were given a form of the priesthood, which they used to bless others by the laying on of hands. Despite this precedence, women in the Church today do not hold the priesthood.
- 83** The Church has a long history of discriminating against women and teaching that they are to be subordinate to men.
- 84** In campaigning against marriage equality on Prop 8 in 2008, the Church violated requirements of tax exempt organizations. These actions contradict the charge to obey, honor, and sustain the law.

- 85** Many homosexual members feel guilt, depression, and shame as a result of the stiff anti-gay rhetoric taught by church leaders. Some have even been driven to suicide.
- 86** In the 1970's, LDS-owned Brigham Young University conducted electroshock therapy on gay students to try to make them straight.

Finances and Commercial Ventures

- 87** The Church refuses to disclose its finances, even to its tithe-paying members. This fact is even more discouraging given President Hinckley saying that financial "information belongs to those who made the contribution".
- 88** In Kirtland, Joseph Smith set up an illegal bank that ultimately failed and caused many of the saints to lose their money. There is also evidence showing that Joseph intentionally misrepresented the solvency of his institution.
- 89** Despite being "lay clergy", mission presidents receive a significant amount of financial benefits from the Church. What is more disturbing, however, is that these leaders are explicitly told not to disclose information on funds received, even to tax advisers or the government.
- 90** The Church spent billions of dollars for the recently completed City Creek Center. That the "only True and living Church on the face of the earth" would spend so much on a self-serving, for-profit venture is discouraging.
- 91** Even if no tithing funds were used for City Creek, as the Church claims, nearly all non-tithing funds in possession of the church are derived from tithing.
- 92** The Church, which preaches and expects modesty in dress and abstinence from alcohol, is hypocritical in its advertising of the City Creek mall.

Defending the Faith

- 93** The Church relies on FAIR, FARMS and other apologists to defend the faith, but intentionally keeps some distance in order to maintain plausible deniability.
- 94** Church leaders often teach us that "warm feelings" are more valid in determining truth than actual, verifiable scholarship.
- 95** The Church ignores the issues and questions of sincere truth-seeking members of the Church. We earnestly petition the Church to provide official, honest, and complete responses to these issues.